

SPECIAL REPORT

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SPECIAL REPORT

OF THE

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

OF THE

CITY OF WORCESTER,

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CENTRAL EXCHANGE.
1876.

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APPENDIX NO. 2
TO THE
REPORT OF THE LIBRARIAN
OF THE
FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF THE
CITY OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS, U. S. A.

THE following paper has been written by the Librarian, in response to a vote of the Board of Directors, requesting him to prepare a brief account of the history and distinctive features of the institution under our charge. It has been prepared for use at the International Exhibition to be held in Philadelphia next Summer.

On the twenty-seventh day of December, Anno Domini, 1859, by a deed of gift, bearing date of that day, the late John Green, M. D., gave to the City of Worcester a library of about 7,000 volumes "in trust for the free use of the citizens and the public forever, as a library of consultation and reference, but to be used only in the library building."

This library had been collected from time to time, during a long professional career, at a cost of not less than \$10,000, with the purpose of sometime devoting it to public uses.

Among the terms and conditions of gift were the following:

"First; The management of the Library, the custody of the books, and the regulations under which they may be used shall be vested in a board of Directors, who shall be citizens of Worcester, to be chosen by the City Council in a convention of the

two branches thereof, two of whom shall, after the first election, be chosen annually and shall hold their offices six years each."

* * * * *

"Third; The City of Worcester shall forever pay the salary of a competent Librarian, to be chosen by the Directors, and shall furnish a suitable Library building for the books to be secure against fire, and to be constructed with reference to the future increase of the Library, and this building shall be kept warmed and lighted at the expense of the city and shall be provided with suitable accommodations for the convenience of those using the books and shall be kept open at all proper hours, according to the regulations of the Directors, for the use of the public.

Fourth; No plan for a Library building shall be adopted without the concurrence of the Board of Directors.

Fifth; The foregoing provisions may, during my life, be changed by the joint action of myself and the Directors in any manner which shall not impair the value and public utility of the Library, but they shall not be altered after my decease, nor shall any books, once added to the department established by me, ever be transferred to any other."

At a special meeting of the Worcester Lyceum and Library Association, holden December 16, 1859, it was voted; that whereas Dr. John Green has indicated a desire to give his library to the city, that the library of the association also be transferred to the city, provided suitable appropriations and arrangements are made for the reception of the two libraries.

The library offered to the city by the Library Association consisted of about 4,500 volumes. Dr. Green gave his books to the city to be used as a reference library. The Library Association contemplated the use of most of those given by it as the nucleus of a circulating library.

The City Council passed an ordinance, dated December 23, 1859, of which the following is the first section :

"The City of Worcester hereby accept the donations of Dr. John Green and of the Worcester Lyceum and Library Association, and establish the Free Public Library of the City of Worcester."

The ordinance, as originally adopted and in its subsequent revisions, carries out, in provisions for the whole institution, the

spirit of the conditions which Dr. Green imposed in regard to the library given by him.

In the First Annual Report of the Directors of the Library, presented to the City government in January, 1861, it is stated that "the building is now far advanced in the stages of erection."

It will be noticed that, by the terms in the deed of Dr. Green's gift, the spirit of which was embodied in the city ordinance also, the whole management of the library is placed in the hands of a board of directors, and not interfered with by the city government. This will be regarded as a wise provision, as the members of the board are chosen with reference to their fitness for the especial work to be performed. Sufficient supervision of the city council is implied in the facts that it chooses the directors, and that it has wholly within its control the regulation of the amount of money it will appropriate yearly for the use of the library.

The conditions in the deed of gift require, also, it will be seen, the city to put up a building secure against fire, to keep the rooms frequented by users comfortable, and to pay the salary of the librarian and other running expenses. In inducing the city to make heavy expenditures in carrying out the object he had in view in giving his library to the city, Dr. Green greatly added to the value of his gift. He may properly be regarded, not only as a public benefactor, but also what he is called in the fourth section of the original ordinance, by which he is made an Honorary Life Director, as the "principal founder" of the library.

The board of directors, as constituted by the deed of gift and the city ordinance, is a conservative body. For several years, however, it has been a custom, or rule almost universally observed, that no person shall be eligible to fill a vacancy in the board of directors arising from the expiration of his term of office. The observance of this rule, while aiding to secure a progressive administration of the library, has also been useful in widening the interest of citizens in the institution, by introducing into its board of direction, representatives of various occupations and tastes prevailing in the community for which it was established.

The year 1865 is memorable in the history of the library for the foundation of the Reading-rooms. A fund of between \$10,000 and \$11,000 was raised for their endowment by subscription among the citizens of Worcester, chiefly through the exertions of Honorable George F. Hoar, at that time an influential member of the board of directors. The money thus raised was carefully invested, and the income of the investment has since been spent in furnishing the rooms with American and foreign newspapers and periodicals. This income, a few gifts, and \$200 taken from the city appropriation, now enable us to place in the rooms, current numbers of 189 journals, magazines and reviews. It is proper to remark here, considering the purpose for which this paper is written, that where a reading-room is joined to a library it may be of great benefit to it. Besides the more obvious advantages which accrue from reading-rooms considered by themselves, it is noteworthy, that in combination with libraries, they serve, as do well supplied circulating departments, to bring the institutions with which they are connected into contact with large portions of the community which would not otherwise see that they are getting benefit enough from them to make them willing to contribute liberally towards their support. A public library is dependent upon popular favor for its existence. It must be so administered as to secure this favor. The expenditure of large sums of money, raised by taxation, upon an educational institution, can only be justified by showing that it exerts a wide influence. This does not mean that you must lower the standard of periodicals and books bought. Keep the standard high. Books and papers may be popular without being trashy or immoral.

It may be remarked, for encouragement, that it is comparatively easy to raise money for the establishment of a reading-room.

With the foundation of the reading-rooms, the library came into its present form. The Green or reference library, the Circulating library, and the Reading-rooms, constitute the Free Public Library of the City of Worcester.

Dr. Green died in the fall of 1865. According to the sixth annual report of the directors, he, from time to time, between the

date of the deed of his original gift and that of his death, gave to the library 4,968 volumes, in addition to the 7,000 contributed at the start. He also remembered the library generously in his will. The main provision of this instrument, for the benefit of the library, is described concisely and clearly in the report to which reference has just been made. This report was written by Honorable Stephen Salisbury, the much respected president of the board of directors in the year 1865. I make the following quotation :

“The probate of the last Will and Testament of Dr. Green, has made known his bequest to this City of Thirty thousand dollars, to be paid within one year after his decease, to the officer of the City authorized to receive it, and to be held with its future accumulations as a separate fund, designated in the Books of this City as the ‘Green Library Fund ;’ and the Testator states that he ‘aims not to gratify any personal feeling of his own, but to set apart and designate the Fund in a manner which shall forever keep it distinct from all others,’ ‘and which shall enable the people of Worcester at all times clearly to perceive its amount and condition.’ He requires that the fund shall be kept, and that the income shall be collected by the authorized officer of the city ; and he provides that the investment and management of said Fund shall be under the direction of a Financial Committee of three directors of this Library, annually to be chosen by ballot, and that said Committee shall annually report to the Board of Directors, and their report shall make a part of the annual Report of this Board to the City Council. It is required that three-fourths of the investments shall be made in ‘real estate mortgage securities,’ and one-fourth in Bank stock ; and in taking landed securities, it is the ‘desire and request’ of the Testator, ‘that in every instance first mortgages shall be taken for no larger loan than one-third of the value’ of the security ; and as to the use and expenditure of the income of said fund, it is directed that one-fourth part of said income shall be added annually to said fund, and that the remaining three-fourths of said income, after repairing any accidental loss that may happen to the principal, shall be expended by said Directors in the purchase of books, to be added to that department of said Free Public Library which was instituted by the Testator, and in repairing and re-binding the books of that department. Provided that when the invested fund shall reach the sum of One Hundred Thousand Dollars, one-fourth part of the income thereof, shall continue to be forever

annually added to the principal, and three-fourths of the income of \$100,000, after replacing any losses of the principal, and neither more nor less, shall be applied to the increase and support of the Department of said Library instituted by the Testator; and the remaining part of the income of said fund, shall be applied and expended by said Directors for the benefit of the whole of said Free Public Library, as well for that part which is kept for circulating or lending, as for that part which was instituted by the testator."

The principal of the Green Library Fund has met with no loss. It has been increased by the addition of a quarter of every year's income. Five hundred and fifty dollars and eighty-five cents, the proceeds of a trust instituted by Dr. Green during his life, has also been added to the fund. This now amounts to thirty-five thousand, seven hundred and twenty-four dollars and twenty-three cents. Fifty shares of bank stock, now held by trustees, will eventually come into the possession of the city, to be applied, besides his other bequests, in accordance with the testator's will, for the benefit of the library.

Honorable George F. Hoar, President of the board of Directors in 1867, in writing the annual report for that year, after reciting provisions of Dr. Green's will in regard to the library, remarks that, "Upon these provisions a grave, and until within a few years what would have been deemed a quite doubtful question of law arose, growing out of the policy of the law which prohibits perpetuities." He then proceeds, in an able argument, to quiet our fears. He speaks of the hesitation of the executors of the will of Dr. Green to pass over his bequest to the city, and narrates the action of the city and board of directors of the library. He compliments the family of Dr. Green for just and honorable conduct in facilitating the carrying of his wishes into effect, and states that the Supreme Judicial Court, upon application, rendered a judgment so far establishing the validity of the will as to order the fund to be paid over to the city. Mr. Hoar then cites two recent decisions of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, and after a discussion of the points at issue, announces his belief "that the city may rightfully and lawfully obey the direction of the will until a fund is

accumulated, ample enough to defray all the expenses of the library, and so fulfil the beneficent purpose of the donor." It is well understood that when Mr. Hoar speaks of an ample provision for a library like ours, he does not mean a paltry few hundred thousand dollars, but a much larger sum. It is worthy of remark, before leaving the consideration of Dr. Green's will, that he is careful to reiterate in it the terms and conditions contained in the original deed of his gift to the city, executed in 1859.

Here, then, we have in the city of Worcester a reference library, founded and endowed by Dr. Green. It is important to inquire whether the citizens of Worcester use the library which has been provided for them. Reports of the directors show that it was but little used for several years. They express regret that this was so, and it appears from their fifth annual report that the establishment of the reading-room resulted from a movement to increase the usefulness of the Green Library. It was thought that a reading-room would add to and bring out its value. Many of the newspapers and periodicals taken are bound, and the volumes placed on the shelves of the reference library. They thus add to its value. Readers of magazines and papers have curiosity awakened which they seek to satisfy by the use of atlases, encyclopædias and other works of reference. A taste for reading and the habit of reading are promoted by a reading-room. A desire to study often follows. A reading-room, in this way, brings out the value of a reference library. At the start, the Green Library reading-room was not properly heated. This defect was remedied by the introduction of a steam heating apparatus. The building is now kept well warmed.

A step in the right direction was made by the directors in procuring a large collection of the best dictionaries, encyclopædias, &c. It was impossible for them to do all that they wished, for they could not get money enough in the earlier days of the library, to enable them to carry out their plans. They did what they could with the means at their disposal. Still, the reference library was not much used. About five years ago there came a sudden growth in its use. This use has increased rapidly every succeeding

year. It is now very large. How has this increase been effected? It has been brought about by the use of very simple means. It was thought that the reason why people did not use the library was that they needed assistance in using it. A new librarian was appointed, and he was allowed to render such aid as was desired by frequenters of the library. Then, all persons in the city who had questions to ask to which they might hope to find answers in books were cordially invited to come to the library and propound them. It was made a rule that every body should be received with courtesy and made to feel that he is an owner of the library, and that its officers are bound to give a reasonable amount of time to finding answers to his questions. The youngest school children, the humblest citizens, were to be received cordially, and an impartial courtesy extended to all. The plan has worked admirably. It has been a cardinal principle with us that the officers should manifest a persistent determination not to allow an inquirer to leave the building without getting, if a possible thing to find it, an answer to his question. When books needed in answering questions are not found in the library, efforts are at once made to buy them. If they are expensive and their purchase cannot be afforded, pains are taken to find out whether they do not belong to some other library or to some individual accessible to the questioner. Time is spent in doing such work as this; the time, too, of persons whose service is somewhat costly. But this time is well spent. The personal relations of an accomplished librarian with users of a library are productive of great advantage. Few users of a reference library know what books to go to to get answers to questions which they have to ask. Many need help in finding out and stating the exact question which they wish to have answered. The librarian steps forward and helps them to give a definite shape to their inquiries, and then refers them to some master of the subject to which their inquiries relate. He gives them the best books, and keeps them from the productions of dabbles in knowledge.

When the reading-room of the reference library is not filled with persons who resort to it for instruction, as will often happen certain hours in the day, the entertainment is sometimes offered

to such as desire it in the form of stories and bound volumes of illustrated papers. That our efforts to build up a large use of the reference department have been successful is evidenced by the statistics given in the report. From this, it appears that 7,321, 12,408, 15,672, 20,550, and 22,833 persons, respectively, have had books given them during the last five years, or have helped themselves to books to be used in answering their inquiries, or to give them enjoyment. A very large proportion of these recipients of information and enjoyment have received answers to serious inquiries. While, too, we are careful to supply the wants of humble inquirers, we are equally solicitous not to neglect the demands of more advanced students. While a half hour is readily spent in finding out for a curious boy how dates can be plucked from the top of the tall palm tree, whatever time is needed is cheerfully given to the scholar whose questions require reference to *Philosophical Transactions* or a *Greek Anthology*, or to the public instructor in preparation for a lecture or review article. A reference library that is not used becomes very unpopular. Where such a library is so administered that a large constituency gets advantage from it all will recognize it as a public benefit, and citizens unskilled in the niceties of scholarship will, in consideration of the benefit they themselves derive from the institution, be willing that money should be spent in supplying the wants of scholars.

It will be remembered that among the "terms and conditions" imposed by Dr. Green in the deed by which he transferred his library to the city, is one which provides that the books shall "be used only in the library building." This provision was extended in his will to the use of all books bought with money left by him and placed in the department which bears his name. It has sometimes been thought that the reference library would be more useful if the books in it could be taken to the homes of users. Now, however, the restrictive provision is, I think, generally believed to be a wise one by persons who have thought much about the matter. There was more reason formerly than exists now for anxiety on the part of citizens to have the books put in circulation. In the earlier days of the library the additions

of books made to the circulating department were wholly inadequate to supply reasonable demands of users. The directors knew that this was so, and bought as many books as they could with the money at their command. *Now* the circulating department is generously cared for, and it is very seldom that a citizen feels it a hardship not to be able to take home books belonging to the Green Library. There are two weighty reasons why these books should not be taken away from the library building. First, it is desirable that investigators should always find them at hand for consultation. Second, books which we put in circulation become dirty and mutilated. Mr. Salisbury speaks forcibly on this head in the fifth annual report of the Directors. He says of the measure of allowing books in the Green Library to be taken to the homes of users, that it "would be like killing the goose that laid the golden egg. For a time the use of the books would be stimulated and increased, but when they should become defaced and worn out by use, it would require to keep the library interesting and attractive, a larger expenditure than the majority of citizens would approve and the most liberal givers might hesitate to place valuable books in a heap of rubbish."

The Free Public Library is mainly dependent for its support upon an annual appropriation made by the City Council from money raised by taxation. This appropriation was very small at first. It continued small for several years. The directors saw that it was very important that more money should be placed at their disposal, and persistently urged the claims of the library for liberal support. Their efforts gradually bore fruit. The city began to grow also, and a greater readiness to spend money on improvements to manifest itself. With increased expenditures in other departments of the government, the annual appropriation of the library began to grow. For the few past years, a generous sum of money has been put into the hands of the directors. In no one of the last three years has the appropriation been less than \$11,000 and the Dog fund. This fund amounted last year to \$3,019.53.

It will interest some persons to know that the dog law may be found in the volumes which contain the "Acts and Resolves

passed by the General Court of Massachusetts" in the years 1867 and 1869. The volume for the former year gives, in chapter 130, "An Act concerning Dogs, &c.," and the one of 1869 contains, in chapter 250, "An Act in addition to an Act concerning Dogs." Under the provisions of this law, in all the counties of the state except Suffolk county, the money raised in towns by payments for licenses issued to owners of dogs, after certain deductions have been made to cover the depredations of dogs among sheep and other domestic animals, must be appropriated by the towns to the support either of the common schools or of public libraries. With such appropriations \$4,000 a year can be spent for books. For the purchase of books we have also available, it will be remembered, the income of the Green Library Fund. The income of the Reading-room Fund, likewise, swells our resources and gives us the means of buying periodicals and papers.

Worcester has a population of about 50,000. The statement just made shows that it furnishes a good example to hold up to other communities of the same size with itself, for emulation in the support of a public library. These expenditures have proved very beneficial to the inhabitants of the city. The number of volumes taken out from the circulating library has increased, as stated in the report, 55,604, in two years. The reports of the last few years show also, as has been stated before, great growth in the use of the reference department. The growth in the use of these two departments of the library is not owing wholly to increased expenditures upon it, but it is largely owing to this cause.

This library was the first public library in New England to open its doors to visitors on Sunday. It is proper, therefore, in ending this paper to say a single word in regard to our experience respecting this custom. The Reading-rooms of the library are open from two to nine P. M. No books are given out in the circulating department to be taken home. The periodicals and papers can be freely used. Books are procurable also for use within the building from either department of the library. The experiment has now been tried for three years. It appears

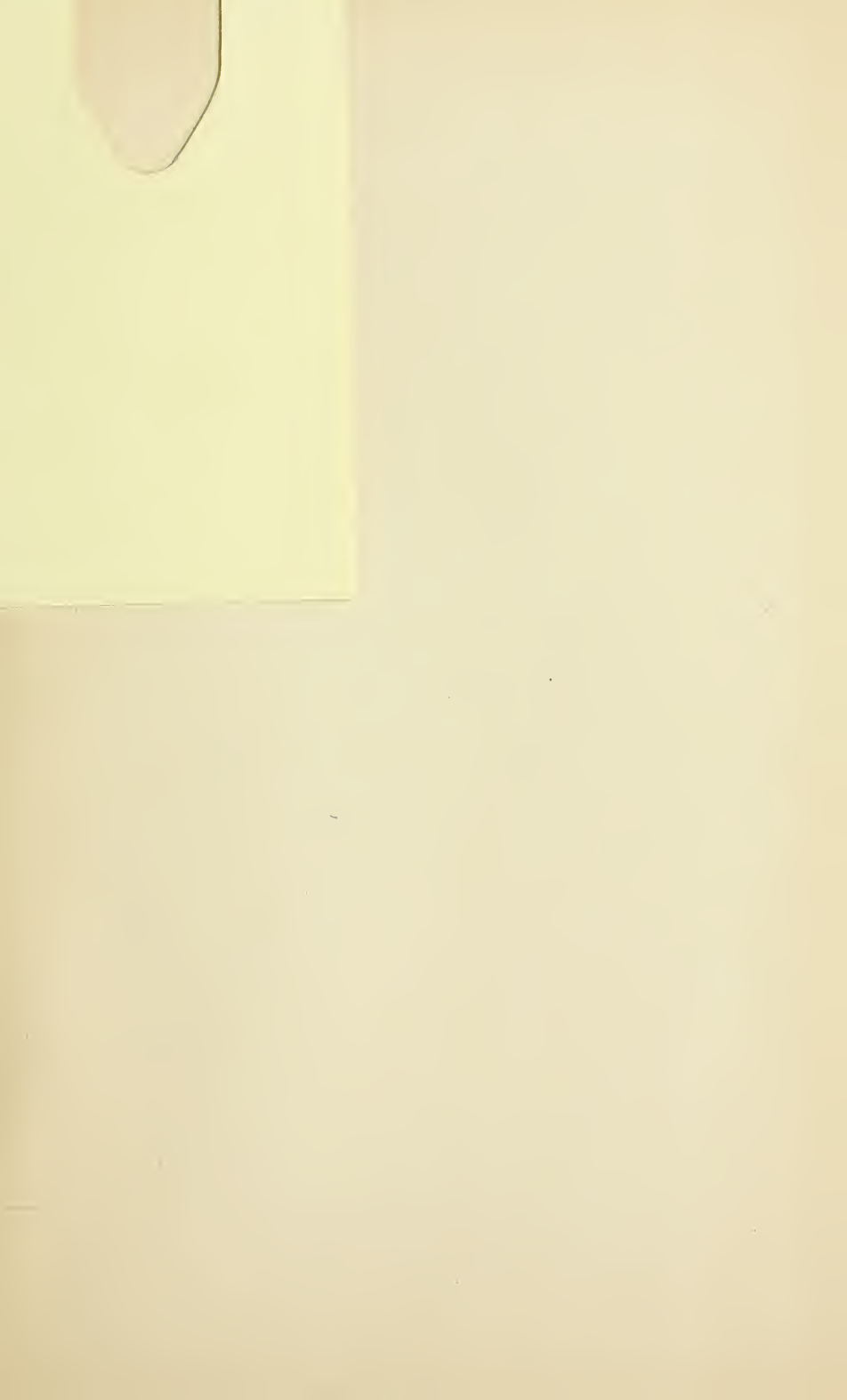
from the early reports of the librarian, that the number of persons who used the reading-rooms Sundays, in the year 1872-3,—for one Sunday less than the whole year, and yet for fifty-two Sundays, — is 5706, for 1873-4, 7179, and for 1874-5, 10,142. The librarian is present for two hours in the afternoon to render assistance to inquirers seeking information from books. One attendant in summer, and two attendants in winter, remain in the rooms during the hours they are open, to see that they are kept comfortable, to preserve quiet, and to aid readers. These attendants are persons who do not serve the library on secular days, but who come to us only on Sunday. In regard to the character of the reading done on Sundays, it may be stated that it is generally of the lighter kinds. Some persons, however, engage in study every Sunday.

I have now stated briefly what I regard the distinctive features of this library, and have mentioned such facts in its history as seem to be of general interest. Having, therefore, performed the duty set me by the Board of Directors, I now close this paper.

SAMUEL S. GREEN,

Librarian.

January 18, 1876.



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